

VOLUME 10 / NUMBER 2 / 1958

*Bulletin  
of the  
Art  
Division*



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The Bulletin of the Art Division

is a quarterly publication of the

Los Angeles County Museum,

Exposition Park, Los Angeles 7, California

Volume 10, Number 2, 1958

Edited by James H. Elliott and William Osmun

Photographs by George Brauer

Designed by Joseph Simon

Printed by Anderson, Ritchie & Simon

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COVER: Eugène Delacroix, 1798-1863

Detail, *Henry IV Conferring the Regency upon Marie de Medici*

Oil on canvas

Los Angeles County Museum Purchase



FIG. 1. Delacroix after Rubens, *Henry IV Conferring the Regency upon Marie de Medici*, Los Angeles County Museum

## A Study after Rubens by Delacroix

The last sound he heard from the outside world was the Angelus of the old Church of St. Germain-des-Prés shortly after dawn on August 13, 1863. With both hands held gently in those of his beloved companion Jenny, and "... almost with a smile," to use the words of his friend Théophile Silvestre, "... Ferdinand-Victor-Eugène Delacroix died, a painter of great race, who had the sun in his head and storms in his heart; who, for forty years, played the entire range of the keyboard of human passion, and whose brush, grandiose, terrible or suave, passed from saints to warriors, from warriors to lovers, from lovers to tigers, and from tigers to flowers."<sup>1</sup>

1863 was a crucial year in the history of art. The Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris was reorganized as the result of increasing pressure from progressive artists. It was the year of the famous Salon des Refusés. A young *provençal* named Paul Cézanne returned to Paris with the determination to make painting his life's work. A group of young students with such names as Monet, Renoir and Sisley quit the academic classroom studio where they had met and went to a place in the country called Chailly where they began to work out the idea of painting outdoors in the light of the sun. Manet finished a picture called *Olympia*.

Delacroix knew, before he died, that all of this was going on. He had felt, as a matter of fact, that it would happen long before it actually started; and he even felt that *his* life and *his* work had been a necessary part of the

process. He did *not* realize, however, that very many *other* people felt this way about his contribution. Denied election to The Institute of France until the very last years of his life, and buffeted by four decades of struggle against the relentless tides of academicism, neo-classicism and reaction, the greatest of all the romanticists ended his days like a proud old lion, bleeding alone at the back of his lair. He did not know that Monet and some of his young colleagues used to visit a friend who lived near St. Germain-des-Prés because, from this friend's apartment window, they could glimpse the great master working at his easel. He did not know that Odilon Redon followed him through the streets at a respectful distance one night like an adoring puppy. Delacroix could not know that the first collector of the impressionists' pictures, Victor Chocquet, initially made friends with Cézanne because he found in Cézanne an admirer of Delacroix as ecstatic as he, Chocquet himself, was. Delacroix could not have realized how spontaneously Fantin-Latour was able to put together a group portrait, including such men as Baudelaire, Manet and Whistler, to be called *Hommage à Delacroix*. And, of course, nobody foresaw the inspiration an erratic Dutchman named Van Gogh was to get from voraciously copying Delacroix.

Six months after his death, in February of 1864, most of the drawings, sketches, studies and paintings that Delacroix had left in his studio at 6 rue de Furstenberg were sold at auction in the Hotel Drouot. The sale went on every week-day afternoon for nearly two weeks. The catalog contained 858 listed items, but, since many individual objects such as drawings were grouped under a single catalog number, there actually were several thousand objects in the sale.<sup>2</sup> Each afternoon the auction galleries were full of collectors, friends of the master, artists, students, dealers, speculators and the simply curious. It was a major event. One of the crowd was a serious young artist by the name of Edgar Degas who thought he might buy a picture or some drawings by the master he admired. However, Degas spent his money, and less of it, for

something else that he felt was more valuable to him at that particular time; he purchased a number of color notations and palettes that had been used by Delacroix.

These palettes were not the wooden objects used to hold the paint during the course of working; they were pieces of oiled paper upon which Delacroix would work out, or "prepare," the selection, lay-out and range of his colors for a particular picture. Many of them had pencilled notations on them, made presumably as work on the picture progressed, indicating minor adjustments that would be helpful for the future. Degas was highly excited by these paper "palettes," and he found them instructive through much of his career. Later in life his companion Zoé would read to him out of the notes and memoirs of Delacroix while he painted in a room where these "palettes" of the earlier master were available for reference.<sup>3</sup>

One of the oil paintings that Degas saw at the Delacroix posthumous sale was a study after one of the panels in Peter Paul Rubens' famous *Medici Series*. (Illustrated in Fig. 1; Detail in color on the cover.)<sup>4</sup> In the Drouot sale of 1864 this picture was listed in the catalog as number 169, and it was purchased by a certain M. Hulot for 1,950 francs.<sup>5</sup> Eight years later it appeared at auction again when the collection of Emile Péreire was put on the block on March 6, 1872.<sup>6</sup> Even though the price had risen to 2,150 francs, it was probably at this time that Edgar Degas purchased the picture, for there is no other record of its being in another collection after 1872 until it was sold at Degas' posthumous sale in 1918.<sup>7</sup>

In 1875 Degas was forced to sell his collection of paintings in order to help keep the family out of bankruptcy; his father had died in 1874, and his brother René had borrowed so heavily from their father's firm that they were in serious financial difficulty. In spite of the necessity to sell almost everything, Degas treasured Delacroix's copy after Rubens so much that he kept it. Another person of supreme good taste who evidently appreciated it was the writer George Sand who, of course, was a great friend of Delacroix. Moreau-

Nélaton has recounted a visit he had with Degas, and, since Degas did not own any other Delacroix paintings, the following reference must be to the picture under discussion here. There was "... a copy by the former (Delacroix) after Rubens, before which my companion (Degas) stopped, saying, 'You know, Delacroix let Madame Sand keep that at her house.'"<sup>8</sup>

The picture was recently purchased by The Los Angeles County Museum where it now hangs in the nineteenth century gallery as an object of pivotal importance for anyone who would understand the stylistic development of the art of that period. Julius Meier-Graefe, in his important book on Delacroix, dates the picture about 1835.<sup>9</sup> Delacroix, like Degas who owned this picture for so long, was great enough to *proclaim* his reliance upon the masters who came before him; and he did copies of many earlier artists, as well as of Rubens, from time to time in *all* periods of his life. Alfred Robaut decided that the studies after Rubens' *Marie de Medici Series* were done in 1828.<sup>10</sup> In his comprehensive multi-volume monograph on Delacroix, Raymond Escholier leans evidently toward the earlier date in the twenties.<sup>11</sup> There are no means, at the moment, of arriving surely at a more precise dating, but on internal evidence it seems most likely that the picture originated just before Delacroix's African journey of 1832.

The subject, *King Henry IV Conferring The Regency Upon Queen Marie de Medici*, is from the lower portion of the composition of that same name in the great series of wall decorations that Rubens did between 1622 and 1625 for The Luxembourg Palace in Paris. The whole series is now displayed in a special gallery of The Louvre, but when Delacroix was inspired by them they were still in The Luxembourg. They were part of Marie de Medici's program of embellishment of the palace after her return from exile in 1620, and they constituted, in effect, a grandiose pictorial tour de force of propaganda—an "apologia" for her life, and an attempt to justify her position as rightful Queen of France in the face of dire political insecurity. The propa-



ganda did not work, and a few years after Rubens finished the series Marie was driven from France by her son, Louis XIII, to end her days in exile. Rubens' achievement as an artist worked so well, however, that the series has always been regarded as one of the most important accomplishments of its type in the history of art. Creative artists evidently have approved of this verdict of history, for they have been studying and copying them from the day they were done to the present.

Fig. 2 is an illustration of the Rubens panel now in The Louvre. The central figures are Henry IV, at the left, handing Marie the orb of empire covered with French fleurs-de-lis, a gesture symbolic of his will (which he most certainly did not have) to place the fate of the Empire in her hands while he leaves for the wars from which he never returns. Below and between his father and mother is Louis XIII as Dauphin who holds his mother's hand, indicating his acceptance of the line of authority through her. In the Rubens version he has a pleasant and approving expression on his face appropriate to the Queen's conception of the situation. Delacroix, from the safety and truthful perspective of two-hundred years, has altered it considerably. At the extreme left are the leading warriors of France waiting to depart with their King. Next to the very right edge of the picture, and in the background, is one of the Queen's court ladies who has been given the general appearance of one of Rubens' favorite models, his first wife, Isabella Brandt. In the foreground at the right is a majestic, almost sybil-like, female figure who seems to personify the strength and constancy of womanhood.

Delacroix was not interested in the overall grandiose composition incumbent upon the 17th century artist who was required to decorate impressively a great palace. He limited himself, therefore, to the frieze of beautifully related human figures; and their relationship gains in immediacy and urgency thereby. The individual faces and gestures are more intense and concentrated in the 19th century picture, while the graceful rhythm and choreographic spacing of bodies and feet is not diminished

in the process. By paying less attention to finish and detail Delacroix seems to be trying to *outdo* Rubens in those distinctively Rubensian qualities of vigorous contours and swelling forms. Especially if we look at the figure of the bare-footed woman (illustrated on the cover), one is reminded of a notation of 1824 in Delacroix's *Journal* in which he hypothesizes his ideal style: "A strange thing, and a very beautiful one . . . joining Michelangelo's style to that of Velasquez . . . gentle and full . . . forms with that softness which only a heavy loading of the paint can give, and at the same time the contours vigorous . . . the spaces within the contours smooth and but slightly cluttered up with details . . . very remarkable hands . . . parts of the bodies connected in a grand way . . . smooth cheeks . . . pure noses . . . firmest contours. . . ." This an apt description of our picture.

Delacroix was fairly faithful to the palette used by the noble master he was trying to follow; but the colors became more intense, and they suffer a change because of the handling of the medium. In the words of Silvestre: "The colors of Rubens shine like a tranquil lake, while those of Delacroix glitter like a stream rippled by rain."<sup>12</sup> Rubens *draws* his contours, and then he models and builds his forms like a sculptor within them. Delacroix's brushwork is nervous and broken, and the varied touches of color within this irregular pattern play visually together to create the forms and the space. One is reminded of a description George Sand has given of an evening spent at her house, Nohant, with Chopin and Delacroix as guests: "Chopin is at the piano, quite oblivious of the fact that anyone is listening. He embarks on a sort of casual improvisation, then stops. 'Go on, go on,' exclaims Delacroix, 'that's not the end!' (Chopin says) 'It's not even a beginning. Nothing will come . . . nothing but reflections, shadows, shapes that won't stay fixed. I'm trying to find the right color, but, I can't even get the form. . . .' 'You won't find the one without the other,' says Delacroix, 'and both will come together.'<sup>13</sup> That is the spirit of the nineteenth century speaking—the century of color; and it is the spirit that spoke



FIG. 2. Peter Paul Rubens, *Henry IV Conferring the Regency upon Marie de Medici*, The Louvre



to Manet, Monet, Pissarro, Renoir, Redon, Fantin, Cézanne, and, in the form of our picture, to Degas.

Thousands upon thousands of copies have been made in the course of history. Most of them are more or less obvious failures to re-create what was there in the object being copied. A few of them, however, are so successful that they have been mistaken for the original. None of these is art. When a true artist sets up his easel before the work of another true artist, the *least* of his aims is to re-create what is there in front of him. An artist who has already attained the degree of mastery that permits him to be fully creative in the direction he wishes to go does not copy another master simply to learn a few "tricks of the trade," or even to improve the virtuosity of his hand. When Rubens copies Titian, or Delacroix copies Rubens, or Degas copies Delacroix, the results invariably emphasize the *differences* between these great painters who influenced each other so much rather than the similarities which one might expect as a result of these influences.

The closer one gets in time to the modern age, the more each individual artist believes that he has the potential within him of "doing it better" than the old master from whom he learns and whose work he copies out of admiration. Whether he actually *has* this potential or not, and whether he becomes a greater or

lesser artist, is not pertinent; he must have this belief or he would not be able to sustain himself to the point of becoming truly creative. No matter how much he learns compositionally, coloristically or technically, and often the debt is very great, the independently creative artist is always, in effect, *challenging* the master whose work he copies. He exaggerates and pushes to their limits elements in the work being copied which he selects and translates, voluntarily and involuntarily, according to his own vision and the spirit of his own time and place. By so doing he *uses* the object he copies as a means of discovering himself and proving, sometimes more vehemently in the copies than in subjects of his own choosing, his own distinctive qualities. Like the creative writer, philosopher or politician, the artist uses history and tradition as "ambition's ladder"; and, like the creators in the other fields of endeavor, whether it be in his whole career or in a single work, he is always striving to reach that point where ". . . once he attains the upmost round, he then unto the ladder turns his back."

It was in this light that our Delacroix "copy" after Rubens was made. The result is an expressive picture that is highly enjoyable aesthetically in its own right, while at the same time being a profoundly instructive document in the history of evolving style.

RICHARD F. BROWN

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Silvestre, Théophile, *Eugène Delacroix, documents nouveaux*, Paris, Lévy, 1864, p. 63.

<sup>2</sup>*Vente Delacroix*, Drouot, Paris, 1864.

<sup>3</sup>Rouart, Denis, *Degas, a la recherche de sa technique*, Paris, 1945, p. 46.

<sup>4</sup>*Henry IV Conferring the Regency upon Marie de Medici*, by Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863), after P. P. Rubens (1575-1640), oil on canvas, 34 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 45 $\frac{5}{8}$  inches, Los Angeles County Museum, P.306.58-3.

<sup>5</sup>*Vente Delacroix*, op. cit., No. 169.

<sup>6</sup>Moreau, A., *Vente Emile Péreire*, cat., Paris, 1872, p. 320.

<sup>7</sup>*Vente Degas*, Galerie Georges Petit, Paris, March 26, 1918, No. 25.

<sup>8</sup>Moreau-Nélaton, Etienne, "Deux heures avec Degas," in *L'Amour de l'art*, July, 1931, p. 269.

<sup>9</sup>Meier-Graefe, Julius, *Delacroix*, Munich, 1922, p. 124, illustrated.

<sup>10</sup>Robaut, Alfred, *Eugène Delacroix*, Paris, 1885; our picture is No. 1947.

<sup>11</sup>Escholier, Raymond, *Delacroix*, Paris, 1926, Vol. I., p. 91, illustrated.

<sup>12</sup>Silvestre, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>13</sup>Maurois, André, *Lélia, The Life of George Sand*, New York, Harpers, 1953, p. 280.



FIG. 1. CHAFING DISH, London, 1740-1741. 3 1/2" high

## Paul De Lamerie Silver in the Museum Collections

An important addition to the Museum's Collection of English silver has been made recently by Major and Mrs. Corliss C. Moseley when they gave four examples of the work of Paul De Lamerie (1688-1751). The silver bears the London date-letters for 1731 to 1743 and is typical of De Lamerie's more conservative work.

Perhaps the most interesting is a handsome chafing-dish of 1740-1741, (Fig. 1, A.6894.57-16). Though not a large piece the treatment of the metal is in such a solid, yet lively manner that a grace and dignity is imparted to this domestic object. The legs, which are lion's paws with tails twisted around them surmounted by lion's masks of great vivacity, contribute a sculptural quality. These massively cast features contrast pleasantly with the lighter open-work scrolls, strapwork and panels which are variously finished and chased, either matt or polished. Three of the four cartouche-shaped panels, which alternate with the lions' masks about the dish, have been burnished, but one retains its engraving; a crest showing an elephant's head. The richness of its details contained in a sober outline give this piece a most satisfying effect.

A similar use of silver may be noticed in the smaller sweetmeat dish of 1738-1739 (Fig. 2, A.6894.57-15). Here a circular dish with a generously deep bowl is given elegance by its decorations, a molded wavy edge, and lightness and movement by radiating flut-

ing in the bowl and solidity by four hairy paw feet; all these so complement the proportions of the piece that the whole appears quite artless.

A pair of candlesticks, 1743-1744 (Fig. 3, A.6894.57-14 a & b) of traditional baluster form may be part of a larger set as the base of one is marked "2" and the nozzle of the other is marked "3" and has three notches which correspond to three cut in the socket of the stick itself. Buffing has not improved the surface of these graceful pieces and the removable nozzles, which are unmarked and give an unusually long proportion to the sockets, may have been added later.

A two-handled-cup with cover, 1731-1732 (Fig. 4, A.6894.57-17) is of Britannia Standard silver. Paul De Lamerie continued to work in this softer, though finer, alloy after 1720 at which date it was no longer a legal requirement. The cup is of a simple form, traditionally used in England but the engraved decoration on the cover, handles and foot, of diapered panels, scrolls and shells, is most distinctly French. In this example the fine engraving has lost much of its delicacy through buffing.

Paul De Lamerie was baptized on April 14, 1688 at the Walloon Church at Bois-le-Duc ('s Hertogenbosch) in the Netherlands. His father was a gentleman in the service of William of Orange, later King William III of England. In March 1689 the family followed the King to England, where Paul most probably spent the rest of his life. On August 6, 1703 he was apprenticed to Peter Platel for seven years, to learn the craft of goldsmith. Peter Platel was a Huguenot also and a most talented goldsmith. At this time Paul De Lamerie was introduced to French, and other continental designs which so often give his work its particular distinction. On February 4, 1712 he was made a Freeman of the City of London and the day after registered the first of his three marks, a block "LA" with a star and lily. His second mark a block "PL" with a crown and star was registered March 17, 1732 and his last, a script "PL" with a crown and star, on June 27, 1739. Examples of all

these marks are found on the silver given by Mayor and Mrs. Moseley. On February 11, 1717 Paul De Lamerie married Louise Juliott; they had six children. On July 18, the same year he was admitted to the Livery of the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths of the City of London.

His work was held in such high regard that, with several other goldsmiths, he was chosen to execute some new plate for the company; this he completed in 1741. It remains the property of the company and has always been considered among De Lamerie's finest work. In 1743 he was made Fourth Warden of the Goldsmiths' Company and in 1746 Third Warden and in 1747 Second Warden. He most probably would have been made First Warden later but for a prolonged illness, to which he refers in his Will and which probably caused his death in August 1751.

Though his production was a large one he had but few apprentices. His work is usually divided into two periods and manners. In the first, from 1712 to 1732, or "less decorated,"

he used the "Britannia Standard" silver. This alloy was a legal requirement for plate made from 1697 to 1720. It was a finer silver than that used in the coinage and the purpose of the law was to prevent the melting of the coinage as there was a shortage of silver. De Lamerie preferred to use this silver for at least 10 years after it was longer required. His second, or "decorated" manner covers the years 1732-1751. Though finer examples of chasing may be found in earlier work his most important pieces date from this period. These are often lavishly chased and almost "sculpt" with forms not indigenous to England. The history of English silver shows a constant assimilation of foreign forms and influences and Paul De Lamerie's great contribution was his mature combination of English workmanship with French design. The magnificent plate made for the Goldsmiths' Company remains as the most forceful expression of a major artistic personality of his time.

WILLIAM OSMUN

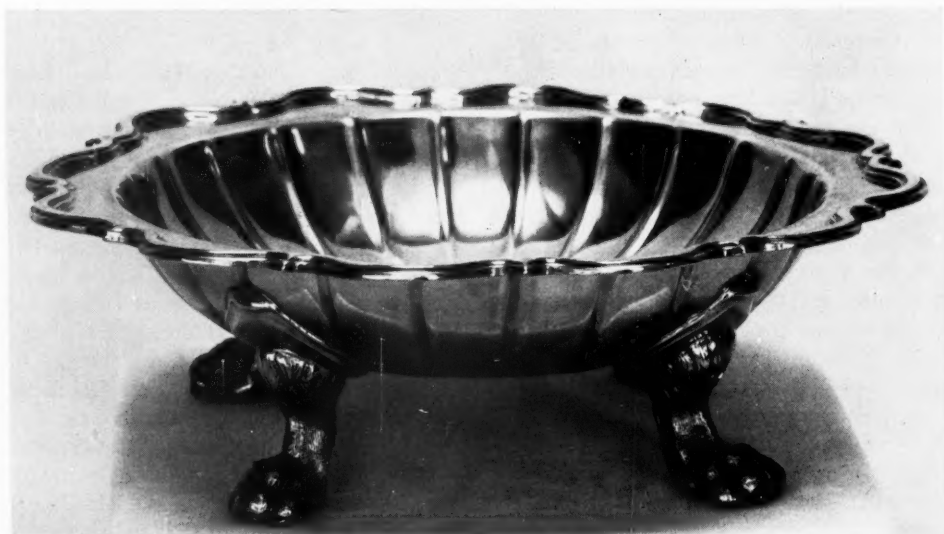


FIG. 2. SWEETMEAT DISH, London, 1738-1739. 2" high



FIG. 3. PAIR OF CANDLESTICKS, London, 1743-1744. 8½" high

FIG. 4. DOUBLE-HANDLED CUP with COVER, London, 1731-1732. 10" high



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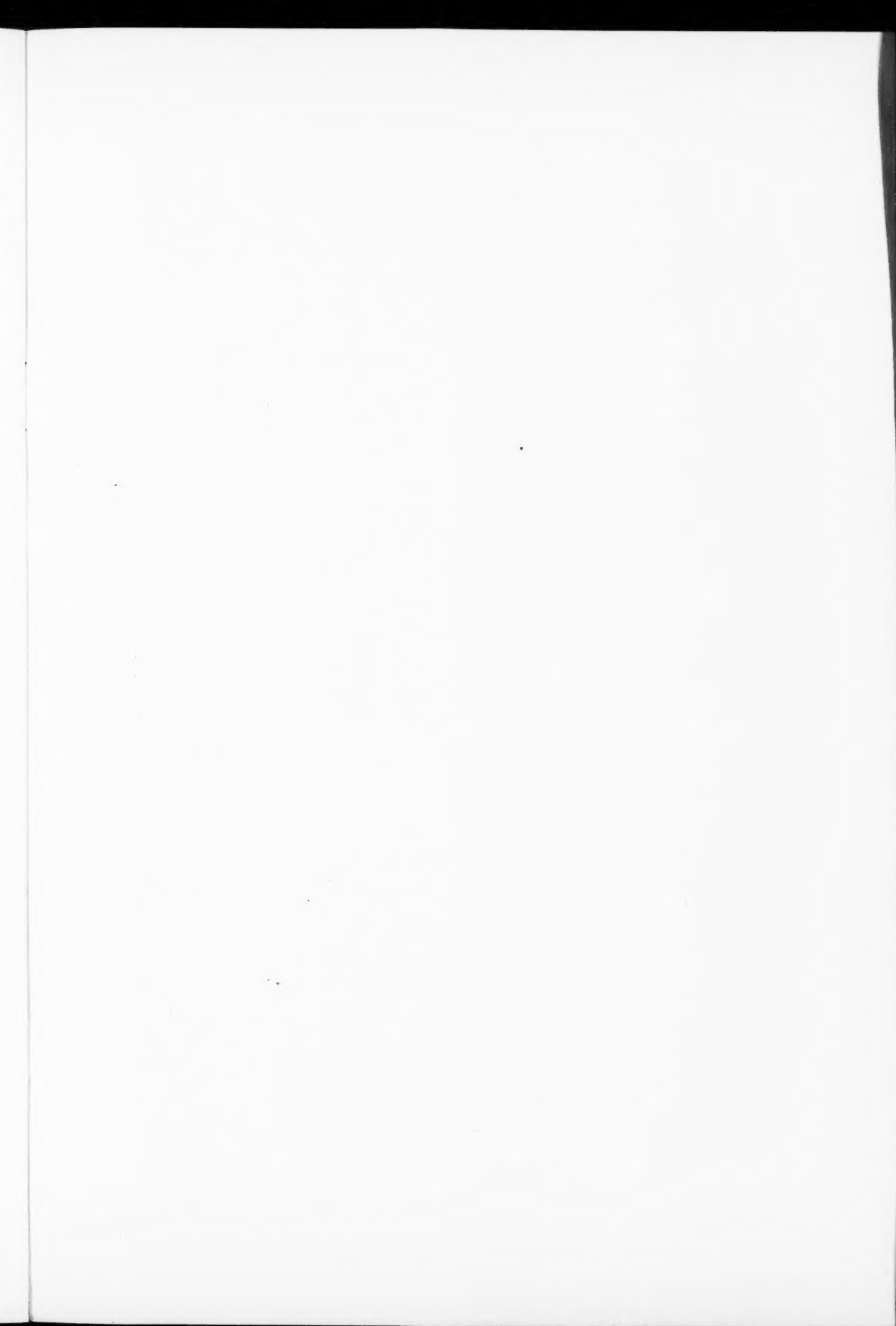
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